

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior version, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

We Claim:

1. (currently amended) A method of entering a host into a new conference call, the method comprising at least the following:

receiving a call and receiving at least a conference code from a given caller at a VRU;

~~receiving at least a conference code from the given caller at the VRU;~~

forwarding the conference code to a proxy server via a provisioning database, wherein the provisioning database responds to the VRU with a signal indicating a validity or an invalidity of the conference code submitted by the VRU to the provisioning database;

sending a request to the proxy server to enter the given caller into a conference call and determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;

~~determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;~~

maintaining a list, by the proxy server, of each of a plurality of interface servers, wherein each of the plurality of interface servers function at least in part to support the queues that contain requests to be acted upon by a conferencing request, the proxy server further maintaining running counts of message requests pending or awaiting on each of the plurality of interface servers and performing load balancing across each of the plurality of interface servers;

forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which comprises at least a data store and at least a plurality of one interface servers receiving the request;

determining that the given caller is a conference host;

determining that at least one participant has called in previously to the given caller and has provided a conference code that is at least related to the conference code entered by the given caller;

requesting that a new conference be created that corresponds to the conference code entered by the given caller;

assigning the new conference to one of a plurality of mixers, wherein the conference management system requests that the proxy server select one of the plurality of mixers to host the new conference call, which will be associated with a unique identifier generated for the new conference;

corresponding a unique mixer identifier to the selected mixer stored with the conference code and the conference identifier thereby associating the conference with the mixer;

providing the unique identifier to the one mixer and the VRU, wherein the mixer identifier uniquely identifies the one mixer to the VRU;

loading the data store with at least the conference code, the unique identifier for the new conference, and the mixer identifier; and

placing the VRU and the one mixer in audio communication.

2. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising determining a class of mixer associated with the conference code.
3. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting a class of mixer to host the new conference based on the conference code.
4. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein assigning the new conference includes assigning the new conference to a mixer of a class associated with the conference code.
5. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving at least a second call from a second caller seeking entry to the new conference call, wherein the at least second call is received at a further VRU.

6. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising disconnecting a communication link between a given conferee and the VRU.
7. (original) The method of claim 6, wherein disconnecting includes the given conferee entering at least one DTMF signal into a handset.
8. (original) The method of claim 6, wherein disconnecting includes the given conferee hanging up a handset.
9. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising sending a disconnect message to the mixer hosting a conference to which a given conferee coupled.
10. (original) The method of claim 9, wherein sending a disconnect message includes referencing at least one parameter that was associated with the given conferee when the given conferee entered the conference.
11. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising muting of a single, selected conferee.
12. (original) The method of claim 11, wherein muting includes at least in part referencing at least one parameter representing an order in which a plurality of conferees entered the conference.
13. (original) The method of claim 12, further comprising obtaining the parameter by requesting a roll call of the conferees.
14. (original) The method of claim 12, further comprising obtaining the parameter via web-based interface.
15. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising locking at least one given conference such that no additional conferees may be added to the at least one given conference.
16. (original) The method of claim 15, wherein locking the at least one given conference is performed on a conferencing management system without involving a mixer hosting the at least one given conference.

17. (original) The method of claim 15, wherein locking the at least one given conference is performed on at least one voice response unit receiving requests from the additional conferees, by direct access to a conferencing database.
18. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein locking the at least one given conferee is performed without involving a mixer hosting the at least one given conference.
19. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising selectively deleting an individual conferee from a given conference.
20. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein deleting the at least one individual conferee includes referring to at least one parameter that is related to an order in which a plurality of conferees entered the given conference.
21. (original) The method of claim 20, further comprising obtaining the parameter via a roll call of conferees.
22. (original) The method of claim 20, further comprising obtaining the parameter via a web-based interface.
23. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising outdialing from within the conference call to at least one third party.
24. (currently amended) A method of entering a conference call participant into a new conference call, the method comprising at least the following:
  - receiving a call and receiving at least a conference code from a given caller at a VRU;
  - ~~receiving at least a conference code from the given caller at the VRU;~~
  - forwarding the conference code to a proxy server via a provisioning database, wherein the provisioning database responds to the VRU with a signal indicating a validity or an invalidity of the conference code submitted by the VRU to the provisioning database;

sending a request to the proxy server to enter the given caller into a conference call and determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;

~~determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;~~

maintaining a list, by the proxy server, of each of a plurality of interface servers, wherein each of the plurality of interface servers function at least in part to support the queues that contain requests to be acted upon by a conferencing request, the proxy server further maintaining running counts of message requests pending or awaiting on each of the plurality of interface servers and performing load balancing across each of the plurality of interface servers;

forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which comprises at least a data store and at least a plurality of one interface servers receiving the request;

determining that the given caller is a conference participant;

requesting that a new conference be created that corresponds to the conference code entered by the given caller;

assigning the new conference to one of a plurality of mixers;

generating a unique identifier for the new conference;

providing the unique identifier to the one mixer and the VRU;

providing a mixer identifier that uniquely identifies the one mixer to the VRU;

loading the data store with at least the conference code, the unique identifier for the new conference, and the mixer identifier; and

placing the VRU and the one mixer in audio communication.

25. (currently amended) A method of entering a conference call participant into a new conference call, the method comprising at least the following:

receiving a call and receiving at least a conference code from a given caller at a VRU;

~~receiving at least a conference code from the given caller at the VRU;~~

forwarding the conference code to a proxy server via a provisioning database, wherein the provisioning database responds to the VRU with a signal indicating a validity or an invalidity of the conference code submitted by the VRU to the provisioning database;

sending a request to the proxy server to enter the given caller into a conference call and determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;

~~determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;~~

forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which comprises at least a data store and at least one interface server receiving the request;

determining that the given caller is a conference participant;

requesting that the given caller be placed on hold until a conference host associated with the conference code calls in; and

when the conference host calls in, performing at least the following:

assigning the new conference to one of a plurality of mixers;

generating a unique identifier for the new conference;

providing the unique identifier to the one mixer and the VRU;

providing a mixer identifier that uniquely identifies the one mixer to the VRU;

loading the data store with at least the conference code, the unique identifier for the new conference, and the mixer identifier; and

placing the VRU and the one mixer in audio communication.

26. (currently amended) A method of entering a conference call participant into a new conference call, the method comprising at least the following:

receiving a call and receiving at least a conference code from a given caller at a VRU;

~~receiving at least a conference code from the given caller at the VRU;~~

forwarding the conference code to a proxy server via a provisioning database, wherein the provisioning database responds to the VRU with a signal indicating a validity or an invalidity of the conference code submitted by the VRU to the provisioning database;

sending a request to the proxy server to enter the given caller into a conference call and determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;

~~determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;~~

maintaining a list, by the proxy server, of each of a plurality of interface servers, wherein each of the plurality of interface servers function at least in part to support the queues that contain requests to be acted upon by a conferencing request, the proxy server further maintaining running counts of message requests pending or awaiting on each of the plurality of interface servers and performing load balancing across each of the plurality of interface servers;

forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which comprises at least a data store and at least a plurality of ~~one~~ interface servers receiving the request;

determining that the given caller is a conference participant;

requesting that the given caller be connected with at least a further caller temporarily until a conference host associated with the conference code calls in; and

when the conference host calls in, performing at least the following:

- assigning the new conference to one of a plurality of mixers;
  - generating a unique identifier for the new conference;
  - providing the unique identifier to the one mixer and the VRU;
  - providing a mixer identifier that uniquely identifies the one mixer to the VRU;
  - loading the data store with at least the conference code, the unique identifier for the new conference, and the mixer identifier; and
  - placing the VRU and the one mixer in audio communication.
27. (currently amended) A method of entering a host into a new conference call, the method comprising at least the following:
- receiving a call and receiving at least a conference code from a given caller at a VRU;
  - ~~receiving at least a conference code from the given caller at the VRU;~~
  - forwarding the conference code to a proxy server via a provisioning database, wherein the provisioning database responds to the VRU with a signal indicating a validity or an invalidity of the conference code submitted by the VRU to the provisioning database;
  - sending a request to the proxy server to enter the given caller into a conference call and determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;
  - ~~determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing services;~~
  - maintaining a list, by the proxy server, of each of a plurality of interface servers, wherein each of the plurality of interface servers function at least in part to support the queues that contain requests to be acted upon by a conferencing request, the proxy server further maintaining running counts of message requests pending or awaiting on each of the plurality of interface servers and performing load balancing across each of the plurality of interface servers;



forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which comprises at least a data store and at least a plurality of ~~one~~ interface servers receiving the request;

determining that an existing conference is at least related to the conference code entered by the given caller;

determining that the given caller is a conference host;

obtaining from the data store at least the unique identifier for the existing new conference and the mixer identifier related to the mixer hosting the existing conference; and

placing the VRU to which the given caller is connected and the mixer hosting the existing conference in audio communication.

28. (currently amended) A method of entering a host into a new conference call;

receiving a call and receiving at least a conference code from a caller at a VRU;

~~receiving at least a conference code from the caller at the VRU;~~

forwarding the conference code to a proxy server via a provisioning database, wherein the provisioning database responds to the VRU with a signal indicating a validity or an invalidity of the conference code submitted by the VRU to the provisioning database;

sending a request to the proxy server to enter the caller into a conference call and  
determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to  
conferencing services;

~~determining, by the proxy server, that the request from the VRU relates to conferencing~~  
~~services;~~

maintaining a list, by the proxy server, of each of a plurality of interface servers, wherein  
each of the plurality of interface servers function at least in part to support the queues  
that contain requests to be acted upon by a conferencing request, the proxy server  
further maintaining running counts of message requests pending or awaiting on each

of the plurality of interface servers and performing load balancing across each of the plurality of interface servers;

forwarding, by the proxy server, the request to a conference management system, which comprises at least a data store and at least a plurality of ~~one~~ interface servers receiving the request;

determining that no existing conference corresponds to the conference code entered by the caller;

determining that the caller is a conference host;

requesting that a new conference be created that corresponds to the conference code entered by the caller;

assigning the new conference to one of a plurality of mixers, wherein the conference management system requests that the proxy server select one of the plurality of mixers to host the new conference call, which will be associated with a unique identifier generated for the new conference;;

corresponding a unique mixer identifier to the selected mixer stored with the conference code and the conference identifier thereby associating the conference with the mixer;

providing the unique identifier to the one mixer and the VRU, wherein the mixer identifier uniquely identifies the one mixer to the VRU;

loading the data store with at least the conference code, the unique identifier for the new conference, and the mixer identifier; and

placing the VRU and the one mixer in audio communication.